

HOME SUPPLEMENT

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## The Little Father of all the Russias

**FEW FOREIGNERS** comprehend how absolute is the power of the Czar. All in Russia is his. **UNDREAMED OF LENGTHS** to which his subjects would go to carry out his imperial will. **HIS AUTOCRATIC POWER**, fostered by the Church, steadily increases even in this democratic age.

By WILLIAM THORP

**A** BUSY American hurried into the office of the Russian Consul-General in New York the other day to ask for some information about Russia. As he stood by the wicket gate of the outer office, waiting for admission, the Consul-General happened to notice him.

"Kindly remove your hat, sir," he said. "Do you not see that you are standing in the presence of His Majesty the Emperor of Russia?" and he pointed to a colored portrait of the Czar on the wall.

In every Russian Legation and Consulate throughout the world there is—or, at least, there ought to be—a similar portrait, and everybody who sees it is obliged to take off his hat and do reverence as if he were in the actual presence of the ruler of all the Russias. When such observances are exacted in a bustling American skyscraper, where scant reverence is paid to anybody or anything, it becomes easier to understand the absolute, willing submission of more than 90 per cent. of the Russian nation to the will of one man.

Few Americans, although they talk glibly of the despotism of the Czar, really comprehend the lengths to which that submission goes. Henry Norman, the well-known English publicist, who is a leading authority on Russian affairs, told a striking story on this head. He said that, during his recent travels in Russia, he remarked to a Russian statesman that the Trans-Siberian Railroad would not realize the expectations formed of it by the military party, because it would be impossible to convey large masses of troops over the line to the Far East within a short time.

**WOULD ABANDON ALL  
INTERNAL COMMERCE  
IF NECESSARY**

"And, pray, why would it be impossible?" asked the statesman.

"There would not be enough rolling stock available," replied Mr. Norman.

"But every engine and carriage in Russia would be put there if necessary."

"Surely that would not be possible," objected the Englishman. "It would disorganize the entire commerce of the country, and bring ruin, and even starvation, to tens of thousands of your people."

"I see you do not understand us yet," said the Russian. "If the Czar gave the word to take every railway carriage in Russia and run it across the Siberian Railroad and throw it into the China Sea at the other end, who, I would like to know, would prevent it? Certainly, nobody in Russia would have the audacious insolence and wickedness to attempt to do so."

There is the real secret of the Czar's power over his people. Disloyalty is, to the Russian, not only a crime in the eyes of the law, but a heinous sin in the eyes of God. The priests of the Orthodox Church are never weary of driving that idea into the heads of their flocks, but, indeed, they are preaching to the converted. The average Russian in all grades of society, but especially in the peasant class, is absolutely convinced of the Czar's divine right to govern him and to dispose freely of his property, his services, and even his life, exactly as he chooses. So sacred is the person of the monarch, so utterly aloof from other men, that even the head of the Church, the chief minister of God, is not deemed competent to crown him. The Czar must crown himself.

In the last two or three years there have been many strike riots and street fights reported from the principal cities of Russia; and it has been commonly said that the revolutionary spirit is growing among the working classes at a remarkable rate. But it is doubtful whether this is the fact. The very workmen who stone the gendarmes, burn the houses of obnoxious officials, and finally disperse under the terrible whips of the Don Cossacks, are usually as loyal to the Czar as his own generals. They simply believe that they have been oppressed by greedy tax-gatherers and tyrannical officials who do not carry out his will. If only they could bring their grievances to the knowledge of the "Little Father," they argue, he would speedily give them justice.

**THE HUMBLEST DO NOT  
HESITATE TO SEEK  
THE IMPERIAL PRESENCE**

This absolute trust in the righteousness of the Czar often prompts his humblest subjects to approach him with petitions for employment, for relief from some petty impost, or for the pardon of an imprisoned relative. His Majesty is always surrounded by a cordon of secret service guards, but, if the gossip of St. Petersburg is to be believed, these petitioners often manage to break through and talk

with him, especially when he is staying at his favorite country estate, Tsarkoe Selo.

The curious thing about the Czar's power is that

it is on the increase, although this is supposed to be a democratic age. Nicholas II. has far greater autocratic powers than Peter the Great or Catherine had.

This is due to the steadily increasing power of the Church, which teaches so insistently the doctrine of the divine right of the monarch.

**REMARKABLE AFFECTION** with which the Emperor is regarded by his people of his empire.

**THE RUSSIANS** believe that he is nearer to them than any other monarch now reigning is to his people.

**HOW FAR THE CZAR** rules and how far he is ruled by his subtle ministers.

But the Czar, though placed upon such a lofty pedestal, is yet nearer to his subjects than most other monarchs. A host of ancient traditions and customs bring rich and poor, lowly and mighty, together in Russia as they do in no other country in the world.

A Russian gentleman, who was entertaining an English guest at dinner, pointed to the servant who was waiting upon them and remarked to the Englishman, "That man has been kissed by the Czar."

The Englishman expressed surprise, and the Russian explained that his servant, when in the army, happened to be placed on sentry duty in the garden of one of the Czar's palaces on Easter morning.

When the Czar walked out into the garden soon after sunrise, the sentry saluted and said, "Voskress Christos!" ("Christ is risen!")—the invariable Easter greeting in Russia.

The Czar halted and kissed the sentry on the cheek, replying, "He is risen, indeed." Immemorial tradition prescribes this answer to the first salutation of the sort, whoever may happen to give it.

**ALL RUSSIAN LIVES AND  
RUSSIAN PROPERTY  
ARE OWNED BY THE CZAR**

The Czar owns everything in Russia. The land and the people are his to dispose of as he sees fit. In the Russian army recruits are told of a battle in one of the Central Asian campaigns. The artillery, badly wanted at the front, was stopped by a deep ditch. Scores of infantrymen threw themselves into the ditch and filled it up, so that the guns could pass over their bodies to win another victory for the Czar.

This story is not told in Russia as a deed of heroism, but as an example of the proper relation of ruler and ruled.

The Czar Nicholas II., unlike most of his predecessors, is a widely traveled man. Before he came to the throne, in 1894, he made a tour through Greece, Egypt, India, Ceylon, Japan and Siberia. He was away from Russia for the greater part of 1890 and 1891.

In Japan he was warmly received by the Mikado, and some of the most magnificent entertainments ever seen in the country were got up in his honor. A Japanese fanatic, however, attempted to assassinate him, and very nearly succeeded in doing so. That unfortunate incident did much to inflame popular sentiment in Russia against Japan, although the Czar himself did all in his power to show that he did not regard the authorities as being in any way responsible.

While in the Far East he cut the first sod of the eastern section of the Siberian Railroad at Vladivostok. He took the greatest interest in that enterprise from the time it was first projected by General Annenkov, and was appointed by his father president of the Imperial Commission formed to carry it out.

**HOW THE CZAR RULES  
AND HOW  
HE IS RULED**

It is a much-debated question, even in the best informed Russian circles, how far the Czar rules and how far he is ruled by his ministers. Nicholas has shown himself to be humane, conscientious, and sincerely desirous to promote his people's welfare and preserve the peace of the world. At his own request, during the famine of 1891, he was made president of the Committee of Succor by his father, and he worked very hard in the organization of relief. His work in the cause of peace is well known to the world. It is a curious fact that, although he received a military education and has held several military commands, he has always entertained the strongest dislike of militarism.

But Nicholas is emphatically an autocrat. He has always insisted on being an absolute ruler, dismissing several ministers for acting without his authority and rejecting all suggestions to give a Constitution to Russia. Unfortunately, it is easier for an autocrat to make war than to keep the peace. A Russian Czar can make war by a word, but he might not be able to resist a deluge of facts, figures, documents and arguments in favor of war. His ministers can render his autocratic power useless, as they have done over and over again, by presenting a case in such a manner as to make only one decision possible.

As might be expected under an autocracy, there is always much scheming on the part of individual Ministers to gain the ear of the Czar and secure his approval of their plans and policies before other Ministers can persuade him against them.

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